



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Minnesota Forests for the Future Phase VI
Laws of Minnesota 2018 Final Report

General Information

Date: 12/06/2022

Project Title: Minnesota Forests for the Future Phase VI

Funds Recommended: \$1,473,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2018, Ch. 208, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 3(c)

Appropriation Language: \$1,473,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire lands in fee and to acquire easements for forest, wetland, and shoreline habitat through working forest permanent conservation easements under the Minnesota forests for the future program according to Minnesota Statutes, section 84.66. A conservation easement acquired with money appropriated under this paragraph must comply with Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 13. The accomplishment plan must include an easement monitoring and enforcement plan. Of this amount, up to \$25,000 is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Christine Ostern

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Location Information

County Location(s): Lake, Cass, Hubbard and Morrison.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

This Minnesota Forests for the Future project protected 1,947 acres of forest and forested wetlands with 1,478 acres of perpetual working forest conservation easements and 469 acres of fee title acquisition in Cass, Hubbard, Lake and Morrison Counties; ensuring public benefits, management access and sustainable managed forests.

Process & Methods

Forest land ownership changes within recent years, primarily within the industrial forest ownerships, are occurring as the timber industry restructures and looks to obtain value from their land through real estate sales and recreational leases. These sales can result in forest fragmentation or even outright conversion of forest lands, impact public recreational access including recreational trail routes, affect forest management access by public agencies across the impacted lands, degrade wildlife habitat and decrease the use of sustainable forestry practices.

The current project has targeted a total of four properties in these three categories: 1) a large industrial ownership located in northeastern Minnesota whose property adjoins and is commingled with thousands of acres of other public forests including those owned and managed by the state, Lake County and the Superior National Forest; 2) a large industrial ownership publicly accessible in north central Minnesota adjoining thousands of acres of other public forests owned and managed by the state and Hubbard County; and 3) two family owned properties located in Morrison and Cass Counties, adjacent to public land, in areas of high forest conversion threat and in areas identified as priorities for land protection through local watershed analysis and planning.

LSOHC appropriations target priority projects as determined by the scoring criteria developed in consultation with the Minnesota Forests for the Future Advisory Committee (stakeholder group). Projects may need to be scaled back or phased to accommodate the available funding. Each project included in this report were located within program priority areas as identified by a GIS model that integrates recreational, ecological and economic data.

These projects addressed forest fragmentation, habitat degradation, recreational and management access and sustainable forestry through perpetual conservation easements and fee acquisition that will protect the forest and wetland habitats in perpetuity, restrict forest parcelization and development, provide for public recreational access and public management access and promote sustainable forest management practices.

The Minnesota Forests for the Future and Federal Forest Legacy Programs have proven to be cost effective programs for protecting private forest land habitat in Minnesota, while also providing public recreational and agency management access and ensuring sustainable forestry. These programs have protected over 360,000 acres to date at an average cost of less than \$300/acre. Over \$24 million in non-state funds have been leveraged for these protection efforts over the past 10 years.

How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

The project area provides a wide diversity of habitats to many fish, game and non-game wildlife species found in northeastern and north central Minnesota including moose, gray wolf, black bear, Canada lynx, white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, spruce grouse, waterfowl, forest songbirds, and trout and other fish. With areas of shoreline on trout streams, other streams, ponds, small lakes and numerous wetlands the project area provides the critical shoreland habitats that are essential to many fish and wildlife populations. The project area lies in the transition area between the conifer dominated boreal forests of the north and deciduous forest to the south that together with the array of streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands provides a rich mosaic of habitats that support these species. Over 80 species in greatest conservation need are known or predicted to occur in either the North Shore highlands and/or Toimi Uplands landscapes. Nearly half the project area is identified by the MCBS as high/moderate sites of biodiversity significance.

How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

Land proposed for protection has been identified through GIS modeling analysis that incorporated multiple criteria to identify the highest priority private forest lands for permanent conservation. The criteria focus on conserving lands that provide habitat and other environmental benefits, outdoor recreation opportunities including hunting & fishing, and which support sustainable forestry.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Partners in this project were landowners (including industrial owners), the Rajala Woods Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and the US Forest Service.

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

The Minnesota Forests for the Future and Federal Forest Legacy Programs have proven to be cost effective programs for protecting private forest land habitat in Minnesota, while also providing public recreational and agency management access and ensuring sustainable forestry. These programs have protected over 360,000 acres to date at an average cost of less than \$300/acre. Over \$24 million in non-state funds have been leveraged for these protection efforts over the past 10 years.

What other fund may contribute to this program?

- N/A

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All lands protected through permanent conservation easements will be sustained through standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship that have been developed and implemented in the forest easement program over the past 15 years. Our easement stewardship program incorporates annual landowner meetings, annual on-site monitoring of all properties, records management, responding to landowner inquiries, tracking ownership changes and addressing and resolving easement violations. Funding for the easement stewardship is included in the current proposal. Stewardship funds will be transferred to the designated easement stewardship account and interest earned from the account will fund the annual stewardship and monitoring work for the easement. All easements will have baseline property reports, forest stewardship plans and easement monitoring plans prepared prior to closing of the project.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
June 30, 2022	OHF	Ensure funding is available in dedicated stewardship account per OHF appropriation and accomplishment plan.	Develop Forest Stewardship Plan prior to closing	Develop Baseline Property Report and Easement Monitoring Plan prior to closing.
Annually, Perpetually	OHF - Easement Monitoring Account	Monitor easements annually and enforce easement terms.	Annual landowner meetings and on-site visits to easement property.	Review forest management activities annually and review and update Forest Stewardship Plans periodically.

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$4,200	-	-	-	\$28,000	\$4,200
Contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$730,000	\$730,000	\$732,600	\$150,000	\$153,300	The Nature Conservancy	\$880,000	\$885,900
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$630,000	\$630,000	\$670,800	-	-	-	\$630,000	\$670,800
Easement Stewardship	\$25,000	\$25,000	-	-	-	-	\$25,000	-
Travel	\$3,000	\$3,000	-	-	-	-	\$3,000	-
Professional Services	\$51,000	\$51,000	\$59,700	-	-	-	\$51,000	\$59,700
Direct Support Services	\$4,300	\$4,300	-	-	-	-	\$4,300	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$1,700	\$1,700	-	-	-	-	\$1,700	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,473,000	\$1,473,000	\$1,467,300	\$150,000	\$153,300	-	\$1,623,000	\$1,620,600

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Forest Legacy Coordinator	0.1	3.0	\$4,200	-	-	\$4,200

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Due to new opportunities, the number of conservation easements purchased was higher than the number anticipated in our original request, therefore the easement acquisition costs and professional services were slightly higher than originally requested.

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

- D. This is not applicable because the recipient is a state agency or department.

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	590	469	0	0	590	469
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	630	1,478	0	0	630	1,478
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	1,220	1,947	0	0	1,220	1,947

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$775,000	\$754,500	-	-	\$775,000	\$754,500
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	\$698,000	\$712,800	-	-	\$698,000	\$712,800
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$1,473,000	\$1,467,300	-	-	\$1,473,000	\$1,467,300

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	590	469	590	469
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	630	1,478	630	1,478
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,220	1,947	1,220	1,947

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$775,000	\$754,500	\$775,000	\$754,500
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$698,000	\$712,800	\$698,000	\$712,800
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,473,000	\$1,467,300	\$1,473,000	\$1,467,300

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *Forestlands were permanently protected from development, fragmentation and conversion to non-forest uses by fee-title acquisition and permanent conservation easement which will reduce potential development and fragmentation and consolidate public ownership in larger blocks that are sustainably managed by the Department of Natural Resources.*

Parcels

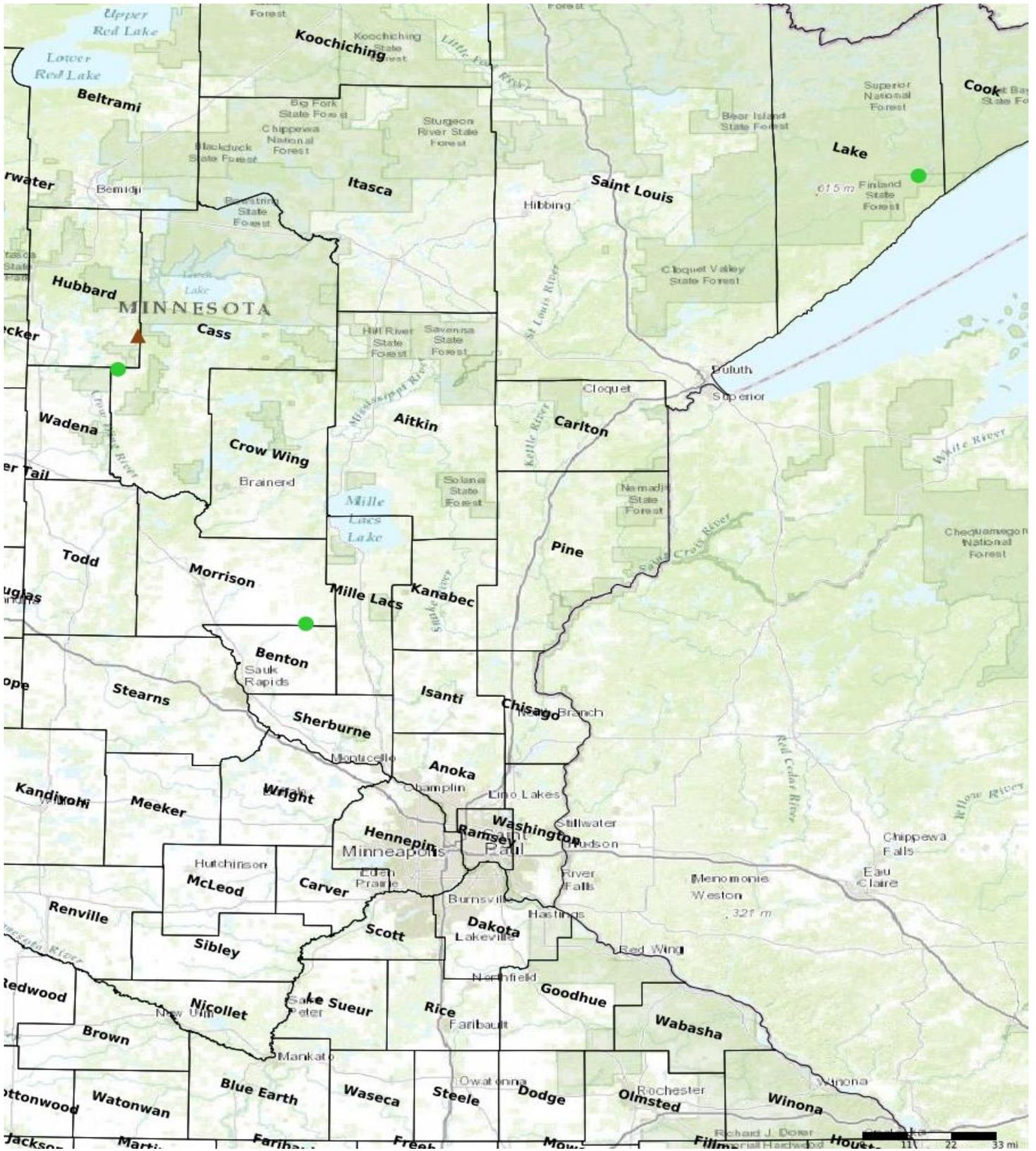
Sign-up Criteria?

No

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Cass - Petron	Cass	13832205	225	\$122,800	No
White Oak Sec 23 / 24	Hubbard	14032224	469	\$732,600	No
Moose Creek	Lake	05806206	1,205	\$456,000	No
Morrison - Reimer	Morrison	03929236	48	\$86,400	No

Parcel Map



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- + Other